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ABSTRACT

Improvement of the lower division undergraduate program of the General College of the University of Minnesota is addressed. Attention is directed to the history of the program, the status of the project when the General College Assembly adopted its 1981 statement, and the nature of the work to be completed during the 1981-82 year. Reference is made to the 1981 Carnegie Foundation essay (Boyer and Levine) showing that general education experienced a swing toward vocational education before the Depression, efforts to reaffirm values central in Western and American civilization after World War II, and an emphasis on science and mathematics and foreign languages after Russia orbited Sputnik in 1957. During the 1960s and early 1970s, students, minorities, feminists, and others called for diversity and relevance in general education offerings. The goals, characteristics, and desirable outcomes of the general education program, and degree requirements of the Associate in Arts Degree of the General College are specified in the 1981 Assembly statement. Broad educational outcomes in connection with skills, liberal education, and application/problem solving have been specified. Faculty have been examining course offerings as part of an effort to refine the liberal education requirement. Boyer and Levine suggest that general education content can be presented under six broad subject categories: shared use of symbols, shared membership in groups/institutions, shared producing and consuming, shared relationship with nature, shared sense of time, and shared values and beliefs. Two recent histories of general education, one by Roland Lincoln Guyotte, III, and the other by Gail A. Koch, are reviewed. (SW)

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GENERAL EDUCATION IN GENERAL COLLEGE: REFINING A PROGRAM FOR THE 1980s

Allen B. Johnson and Norman W. Moen

Note: The General College Missions and Goals Statement adopted by the faculty in 1979, and ratified by the Regents in 1980, states that as it plans for the future, the faculty assigns a first priority to evaluating and revising its general education program for the associate in arts degree. For almost two years now, a sub-committee of the College Committee on Curriculum has been working under the chairmanship of Professor Allen Johnson on the task of carrying out this first and basic commitment of the planning document. The May 11, 1981 statement prepared by the sub-committee and adopted by the parent body--The Associate in Arts Degree in General College: A Definition--was accepted by the General College Assembly at its June, 1981 meeting. Although it is an important first step, the statement is primarily an introduction to an undertaking yet to be completed. For in General College, as in many other colleges and universities, defining and evaluating the general education component of lower division undergraduate studies is a continuous process.

In this edition of Newsletter, Professors Johnson and Moen discuss next steps in refining General College general education by setting the task in the context of the history of the program, discussing the point reached when the Assembly adopted the S'81 statement, and examining the nature of the work to be done during the 1981-1982 academic year in the light of suggestions found in a recent Carnegie Foundation Essay, A quest for Common Learning: The Aims of General Education by Ernest L. Boyer and Arthur Levine (Washington: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1981).

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GENERAL EDUCATION IN GENERAL COLLEGE: REFINING A PROGRAM FOR THE 1980s

Evolution of General Education: The fact that Americans appear never to have reached full agreement about who should go to college and what a college education should include has not inhibited them from establishing institutions and experimenting vigorously with the programs offered in them. As early as 1638, the Massachusetts Bay general court organized America's first college in a township named Cambridge to honor the English university where approximately seventy leading colonists had studied. Four years later, President Henry Dunster described the course of study at this college, Harvard, in these succinct terms:

> Primus annus Rhetoricam docebit; secundus et tertius Dialecticam, quartus adiungat Philosophiam.

This prescribed curriculum did more than follow admired European models; it reflected general views held in common by Harvard founders about history, social structure, ethics, religion, how people learn, and the characteristics of a well-educated man.

That is the way it has been ever since 1638. Courses of study in American colleges and universities may resemble one another in various ways, but seldom in toto because they reflect the changing requirements of the society supporting them. The core program Dunster outlined may have served the ideals and needs of Harvard's 17th century clientele, but it did not become an unchallenged model. Almost from the beginning, higher education in this country has been pluralistic, flexible, and pragmatic, continuously responding to a changing society.

As early as 1756, for example, only one-third of Provost William Smith's "scheme of Liberal Education" for the College of Philadelphia focused upon classical languages and studies. The remainder included mathematics, science, and instruction in agriculture, surveying, mechanics, navigation, and French. All students were required to take advantage of opportunities to improve oral and written English. Occupational or applied education became even more conspicuous a part of American advanced study when the United States Military Academy opened at West Point in 1802, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute began to accept students in 1804. Thomas Jefferson's 1824 plan of studies at the University of Virginia called for eight professorships: ancient languages; modern languages; mathematics; natural philosophy (e.g., mechanics, statics, hydraulics, optics, astronomy); natural history (e.g., botony, zoology, chemistry, rural economy); anatomy and medicine; moral philosophy; and law.

According to Jefferson's never-adopted plan, students would be permitted to choose among the eight fields of study, but freedom ended when the selection was made, for within each field the curriculum was to be entirely prescribed. This kind of rigidity began to diminish as the 19th century advanced, American society changed, and new leaders called upon our colleges to acknowledge individual differences, respond to new needs, and move away from stifling precedent.

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Ralph Waldo Emerson put this kind of challenge in his "American Scholar" address delivered at Harvard in 1837, when he argued that American colleges should adapt courses of study to the needs of those enrolled in them, and also seek to advance a distinctively American culture. For, he said, "we will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds." President Francis Wayland Brown challenged academic tradition in a different way when he proposed 1850 reforms at Brown University under which "Every student might study what he chose, all that he chose, and nothing but what he chose." Congress entered the scene in 1862 with the Morrill Act which promoted democracy and utility in American higher education by endowing tuition-free, public colleges (now known as land-grant colleges) featuring instruction in agriculture, technology, and military science as well as the liberal arts.

Traditional, imported, classical principles about the prescribed content and appropriate sequence of college courses of study appeared to receive the coup de grâce seven years later, in 1869, when President Charles W. Eliot called for the free-choice or fully elective curriculum in his inaugural address at Harvard:

> The endless controversies whether language, philosophy, mathematics, or science supplies the best mental learning, whether general education should be chiefly literary or scientific, have no particular use for us today. This university recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would have them all, and at their best.

By 1895, the only required courses for a Harvard B.A. were two in English and one in modern language--both in the freshman year. Even at conservative Yale, the entire junior and senior years were elective by the turn of the century.

Democracy of access and the elective principle came to American higher education just at the time when persons working in the professions were beginning to form national associations, and graduate studies were being introduced in the United States. The National Teachers Association, forerunner of the N.E.A., was organized in 1857. The American Association of Medical Colleges appeared in 1876, The American Bar Association in 1878 and the National Medical Association in 1895. As time went on, these and other associations began to have a standardizing effect upon the extent, content, and quality of the programs of education for the professions offered on campuses across the land.

Similarly, Yale granted what probably was the first American Ph.D. in 1861. The first department of graduate studies was organized at Harvard in 1872, and in 1876, Johns Hopkins, the first American university having a graduate emphasis, opened its doors. At the turn of the century, 150 institutions in the United States offered more or less extensive programs of graduate study. The Association of American Universities, founded in 1900, was organized in part to promote the uniformity and quality of American baccalaureate and advanced degrees.

All of these developments undermined the concept that certain subjects possess intrinsic values, or exercise certain desirable kinds of impact upon

the mind, which entitle them to precedence in the academic value system over utilitarian or applied studies. Freed from course prescriptions, undergraduates could specialize narrowly or select classes most entirely in the light of career occupational objectives. Responding to the pressure of interest in science, and encouraged by the advent of graduate study, liberal arts courses diversified and proliferated. Literature became philological; logic became symbolic and technical; psychology separated from philosophy, and philosophy itself became positivistic. Harvard began to bring order to all of this in 1870 when it first listed courses by department. In 1905, thirty-two departments at the University of Michigan offered classes having a total of 665 different subject titles. At about the same time, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching introduced the standardized "unit" in connection with its pension fund for teachers with the result that all of this specialized and professional and graduate study soon was somewhat artifically measured in segments called "contact hours" or "credits."

Thus, American colleges and universities entered the twentieth century with specialized or professional or graduate education assuming content and organization familiar to present-day observers. But aspects of the liberal arts component of undergraduate education needed attention. Liberal education commonly is taken to exclude applied or occupational training, to continue the literary or humane tradition in the college curriculum, and to encompass study both in depth and in breadth. Proliferating courses in a free-choice system increased the likelihood that some students might receive degrees after following relatively pointless or meaningless programs. As early as 1902, John Dewey warned that the rapid expansion of knowledge was causing disarray and congestion in the curriculum. Some kind of order needed to be imposed upon undergraduate liberal arts study.

A. Lawrence Lowell, who followed Eliot at Harvard in 1909, and President David Starr Jordon of Stanford, became leaders in a movement directed toward more systematic and prescriptive work in the liberal arts. Thanks to them and to others, concepts of concentration (specific subject-matter focus or major) and distribution (studies ranging through diverse fields of knowledge) began to be widely applied on American campuses. The in-depth aspect of liberal education became the major; the breadth aspect was satisfied by the distribution requirement. The former was shaped, and supervised faculty organized into departmental units. The purpose of the latter, however, was only vaguely or variously descried, and no specific campus or professional group was officially charged with responsibility for its form and development.

Professor A. S. Packard of Bowdoin College is credited with being the first to refer to this breadth curriculum component as "general education." Other professors and administrators found the term useful without agreeing about its meaning. Ernest L. Boyer and Arthur Levine, authors of the Carnegie study referred to in the editorial note preceding this essay, write that Packard

> viewed it as a prerequisite for specialized study. Alexander Meiklejohn, father of the "survey course" and creator of the University of Wisconsin's acclaimed experimental college, considered general education to be precisely the opposite: an <u>antidote</u> to specialization! John Dewey thought of general education as "an integrative experience underlying the unity of knowledge." But A. Lawrence Lowell, the

> Harvard president who promoted distribution requirements, described it as the sum total of "a number of general courses in wholly unrelated areas." In 1947, the Presidential Commission on Higher Education defined general education as education for public participation. Yet John Stewart Mill, years before, claimed it to be education for a satisfying private life. The famed Harvard Report of 1945, General Education in a Free Society, called it plainly and simply "liberal education." But Daniel Bell, in his book on general education, said just as positively that liberal education and general education are by no means synonymous. (pp.2-3)

From these theoretical considerations, Boyer and Levine go on to summarize first attempts to institutionalize general education:

> The first general education revival of this century occured about the time of World War I. In 1914, President Alexander Meiklejohn of Amherst College introduced a survey course entitled "Social and Economic Institutions." It was a wide-angle view of society designed to introduce students to the "humanistic sciences." It was also an attempt to put the ideas of John Dewey into practice. As early as 1902, Dewey had said that the disarray and congestion of the typical college curriculum was not simply a consequence of poor teaching, as many claimed, but rather a result of the rapid expansion of knowledge. Dewey's remedy was an overview course in its manifold phases from which a student can get an 'orientation' to the larger world."
>
> The movement launched by Dewey and Meiklejohn gained momentum after the First World War, with the "survey course" as its centerpiece. In 1919, Columbia University introduced "Contemporary Civilization" and required all freshmen to enroll. This new course [was] a combination of a wartime army training class called "War Issues" and a post-war add-on called "Peace Issues."
>
> Dartmouth and Reed followed suit with their own survey courses. Soon such courses were turning up on campuses all over the country, with at least 30 schools simply copying the Columbia or Reed designs.
>
> Toward the end of this general education revival, several well-known experimental colleges were born. In 1927, the Meiklejohn College was started at the University of Wisconsin. Here the survey course became a two-year program examining Greece

> in the Age of Pericles and the comtemporary United States. In 1928, Missouri's Stephens College, a two-year institution for women, introduced a new curriculum based on "life needs" as distilled from activity diaries kept by 300 women college graduates in 37 states. And in 1932, the University of Minnesota created its own General College.
>
> The most hotly debated experiment of the period was "the College" at the University of Chicago. The person whose name is inextricably linked with this venture is, of course, Robert Hutchins. In reality, the College was a series of experiments. It was launched before Hutchins arrived and continued not only after he retired, but even after the initial wave of general interest had long faded. The College at Chicago was a radical approach to general education, embodying, in varying degree, great books, interdisciplinary courses, early college admission, comprehensive examinations, and a four-year fully-required course of study. The prestige of the University of Chicago and the charisma of Robert Hutchins caught the nation's imagination. Parts of the Chicago program were replicated in experimental colleges, honors colleges, and schools across the country. St. Johns College is a direct descendant of the Chicago plan. (pp. 9-11 passim)

General College was more integral a part of this first chapter in the history of general education than these excerpts indicate. Those familiar with it in its early phase--now almost fifty years ago--recognize that its courses without credits, its unconventional grading system, and its comprehensive examinations cum advanced placement and award of the degree all come from the University of Chicago. Its curriculum, based upon student needs objectively identified in studies of adolescents and adults, followed Stephens College precedent. Its first director, Malcolm Shaw MacLean, was recruited in 1931 from the University of Wisconsin where Meiklejohn's experimental college functioned between 1927 and 1932. While not precisely "surveys" in the Meiklejohn tradition, many of its courses were designed to be broad in scope, cross boundaries between subject matter fields, and seek practical applications.

Boyer and Levine find that the subsequent history of general education in the United States has passed through two phases or revivals, and perhaps is entering the third. As we have seen, the first began shortly before World War I. It ended with the swing to vocational education coming in the wake of the Great Depression. The second followed on the heels of World War II, when educators felt the need to reaffirm values central in Western and American civilization, and sought, in the words of the 1945 Harvard report, General Education in a Free Socity, to identify a core of studies which would have the effect of preventing the people of the United States from having to experience the calamities which fell upon the peoples of Europe and Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. This second chapter ended in 1957 when Russia orbited Sputnik and

American higher education responded with renewed attention to specialized study emphasizing science, mathematics, foreign languages, and programs for the gifted.

General education fell into dire straits during the sixties and early seventies. Indeed, all of undergraduate education came under attack for one reason or another during these years. Students complained about rigidity, narrowness, and impersonality. Minorities, feminists, and representatives of other by-passed groups declared that general education in particular presented a limited view of the world. In consequence, they called for diversity and relevance.

In spite of all this, general education is not dead, but rather seems to be in the familiar process of modification to meet current students' needs. Some scholars still maintain that properly conceived, general education can combat the self-absorption characteristic of the seventies; the apparent weakening of the American social fabric; the decline in the quality of academic performance; the current vocationalism; and the contemporary trend toward academic overspecialization. To some deans and other administrators, reinvigorated general education, consisting in a core curriculum taught by a small junior faculty, can make a crucial difference between economic survival and collapse.

This inherent or potential utility--taken in conjunction with other circumstances documented by the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education or reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education or illustrated by national interest in recent proposals for curriculum reform at Harvard--all can be taken to promise that general education is entering a new and vigorous phase in its history. Publication of Boyer and Levine's essay both reports and promotes this national concern. In Minnesota, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is working to establish state-wide definitions for all associate degrees conferred by public institutions. The proposed state criteria include the requirement that at least sixty of the ninety quarter-credits be satisfactorily completed in coursework distributed through the sciences and the liberal arts.

The Associate in Arts Degree in General College: Statement of S 1981: The General College faculty is moving in tandem with these state and national developments. In June, 1981, the College Assembly adopted a Curriculum Committee report, The Associate in Arts Degree in General College: A Definition. This document, now an official policy statement, deals principally with the goals, characteristics, and desirable outcomes of our general education program. It also prescribes degree requirements--quantity and quality, credits and grades--in concise, flexible, practical terms. In some respects, the new statement codifies policies and procedures approved piecemeal over the past decade. Throughout, it bears witness to the fact that the committee preparing it paid attention to potential HECB stipulations without sacrificing General College curriculum principles and practices.

The Committee warns that the statement is an important first step toward a final objective yet to be attained. It seeks to bring order to our curriculum by providing ". . . a sense of how all the individual parts fit together to serve a common purpose." The outlines of this common purpose are somewhat difficult to discern, however, because the view is obscured by a list of ten admirable behavioral traits to be exhibited by graduates, and another

presenting almost as many, equally desirable, characteristics of a good program of general education. The whole culminates in an ultimate or common, but multiple, purpose which is presented in the form of three outcomes of education: skills, liberal education, and application/problem solving.

There are good reasons for welcoming a rationale stated in the form of broad educational outcomes. For many years, General College proclaimed in its catalogs that its program is founded in studies of student characteristics and needs, and expressed in terms of behavioral change. We will be in difficulty, however, if we attempt to apply these axioms as we work on our general education curriculum this year. We have made no study of student needs for some time. Our student body in the 1980s is now, and promises to continue to be, more heterogeneous than any of its predecessors. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that our lower division general education requirements presently are used by candidates for baccalaureate as well as associate degrees. Further, while faculty have little trouble describing how students will improve as a consequence of completing a course of study, they encounter formidable difficulties when they attempt to test whether the changes did take place, or, if they did, whether the changes can be attributed to the curriculum or to some other factor - such as merely becoming older and wiser?

Of the three educational outcomes, most present-day classroom teachers will have few quarrels with the first, which sets minimum acceptable levels in basic academic skills. The third - application/problem solving - may be more controversial, but the nine credits assigned to it represent only a fraction of the total, and the Committee is to be commended for wanting to experiment with this kind of requirement. The second of the three, the so-called liberal education requirement, requires the most attention and refinement at this point.

The sub-committee responsible for the S81 Definition has assumed responsibility for testing its validity. The records of 143 students who were granted the A.A. degree during the past year and a half are being analyzed in the light of the new policy statement. The purpose, of course, is to gain information about the extent to which this body of graduates would have been able to attain the degree under the new requirements. A preliminary report of findings should be available to the faculty at a September '81 meeting. Implications will be discussed during early F'81. While the sub-committee is thus engaged, it asks the faculty to go to work on content for the second and third outcomes, the "liberal education and problem/solving application requirements." A framework for these outcomes have been constructed. Now we must decide what the building should contain.

Some semantic difficulties, probably resulting from terminology employed in HECB documents, need to be overcome at the outset. The second outcome ought not be referred to as the "liberal education" requirement. According to widely accepted practice, and as mentioned earlier in this essay, liberal education includes study both in depth and breadth. Here we are dealing only with the latter which today commonly is labelled general education. Hence, this second outcome should be termed the general education requirement. Further, the Definition refers to interdisciplinary and/or integrated courses, thematic studies, and distributed credits. Neither individually nor collectively do such delivery processes in themselves guarantee coherent general education. In an attempt to overcome the semantic difficulties, the sub-committee is now asking the faculty to examine current course offerings,

division by division, to determine what should be retained, discarded, modified, or specifically designated, to give content to outcome number two - the "liberal education" requirement. If we act in the light of the goals and characteristics found in the Definition under the heading "Background and Rationale", we might well end by finding reasons to let almost everything we teach count toward meeting the requirement, thus leaving us in the unsatisfactory status quo.

If we turn away from studies of student need and lists of individual student behavioral outcomes, then where can we turn in our search for principles to guide us in our task of evaluating, refining, and renewing our program of general education? Karl Marx based the means of achieving social reform and reconstruction described in Das Kapital upon his interpretation of the lessons of history. Similarly, when Boyer and Levine studied the purposes of general education stated in the 1980 catalogs of 309 representatively selected two- and four-year colleges and universities, they concluded that none of them really ". . .went to the heart of the matter." But when they studied history, the social context of the times when interest in general education reforms peaked, some instructive conclusions emerged:

> . . .a careful look suggests that, despite apparent conflicts and contraditions, general education activity from 1941 to the present reveals a significant, recurrent theme. Each general education revival moved in the direction of community and away from social fragmentation. The focus consistently has been on shared values, shared responsibilities, shared governance, a shared heritage, and a shared world vision. To us, this is an important point. It suggests that the ebb and flow of general education is, in fact, a mirror of broader shifts in the nations's mood.
>
> During each revival, general education spokesmen consistently have been worried about a society that appeared to be losing cohesion, splintering into countless individual atoms, each flying off in its own direction, each pursuing its own selfish ends. They have been convinced that our common life must be reaffirmed, our common goals redefined, our common problems confronted. The specific agenda--the preservation of democracy, the promoting of a common heritage, the development of citizen responsibility, a renewed commitment to ethical behavior, the enhancement of global perspectives, the integration of diverse groups into the larger society--has varied. But the underlying concern has remained remarkably constant. It reflects the never-ending tension between the individual and the group, between freedom and control, between independence and interdependence.
>
> All societies, argued John Locke, are bound together by a tacit social contract, a compact among individuals who cede a portion of their autonomy for what is defined

> as the greater good. In exchange for this concession, every citizen expects certain services, specified protections, and agreed-upon rights and freedoms. . . .
>
> The perennial tension between the individual and the community is mirrored in the college curriculum. The elective portion of the curriculum acknowledges individualism--the right of each person to act independently and make personal choices. So does an academic major; here the student, within limits, is permitted to decide what he or she wants to study.
>
> General education is a different matter. This portion of the curriculum is rooted in the belief that individualism, while essential, is not sufficient. It says that the individual also shares significant relationships with a larger community. In this manner, general education affirms our connectedness. It is the educational tool we reach for in our search for renewal of the frayed social compact. Through general education on the one hand, and majors and electives on the other, the college curriculum recognizes both our independence and our interdependence. It acknowledges the necessary balance between individual preferences and community needs. Just as we search politically and socially to maintain the necessary balance between the two, so in education we seek the same end. . . .
>
> What, then, do we see as the agenda for general education? Simply stated, it is those experiences, relationships, and ethical concerns that are common to all of us simply by virtue of our membership in the human family at a particular moment in history. General education is an institutional affirmation of society's claim on its members. (pp. 17-19 passim)

Reshaping General College General Education During the 1981-1982 Academic Year: Many college teachers will find these views persuasive, for they tend to agree that contemporary students often appear to be cynical, pessimistic, committed more ". . .to their personal futures than to the future we face together." Perhaps our faculty might well seek content for the general education degree component in a program of studies aimed away from preoccupation with self and social isolation toward one reminding all of us that we are both individuals and members of human communities which have claims upon us. Bertrand Russell put this in another way when he said "Without civic morality, communities perish; without personal morality, their survival has no value."

Thus, when we turn to our assignment of determining content for General College general education througout the '80s, we can consider whether or not Boyer and Levine can give useful guidance. General education, they write, ". . .should concern itself with those shared experiences without which human relationships are diminished, common bonds are weakened, and the quality of life is reduced." They continue by presenting this kind of content, these

shared experiences, under six broad subject categories: (Note the hierarchy of values.)

I Shared Use of Symbols

language, composition, mathematics, music dance, visual arts, mass communication, computers, statistics

II Shared Membership in Groups, Institutions

government, business, family, church social institutions, common institutions

III Shared Producing and Consuming

work, vocation, status, economics geography, leisure

IV Shared Relationship with Nature

underlying, interrelated patterns in the natural world; facts and methodology of science; observation, testing, application; science and citizenship

V Shared Sense of Time

common heritage, seminal ideas, recurring themes, roots, resolving tensions, interrelationships among ideas and culture; recalling the past and anticipating the future

VI Shared Values and Beliefs

right, wrong, beliefs, facts, social enforcement of values, similiarities among cultures, predictability of human behavior

These categories are described in detail either in Quest for a Common Learning: The Aims of General Education, pages 35-52, or in the article derived from this publication found in Change, 13:3:28-35 (April, 1981).

Some readers may well see these content suggestions only as a matter of semantics--terminology--old wine in new bottles. Boyer and Levine themselves are quick to point out that they present their proposals not as universal blueprints but as means of initiating discussion. Indeed, their essay is only the opening chapter in what is to be an extended study of general education sponsored over the next several years by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The historical context in which they were conceived lend validity to the Boyer-Levine proposals. They have the value of freshness and currency. They lead us into curriculum reaches we have not explored before. We recommend that each faculty member, and, later, the curriculum committee of each division, arrange each of our present courses under one of the six headings in order to see the extent to which we already are doing what our authors suggest, and to decide if their suggestions point to the way we want to go as we retune our program.

We also recommend that the faculty take advantage of the calendar. General College will mark its golden anniversary, and the University of Minnesota will host the annual national meeting of the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS), both in 1982. We would do well to capitalize upon these circumstances by using them to report what we are doing, seek external evaluation and reaction to our efforts, and supplement or reinforce our conclusions with advice from interested peers representing all parts of the United States. By scheduling birthday observances and the AGLS convention on successive days, we could use the former for reporting and external evaluation; the latter for consultation and a source of new ideas, different approaches. Thus, instead of diverting us from work at hand, these two events could be made to converge upon, and assist us in, the task of refining our program of general education for the 1980s.

TWO RECENT HISTORIES OF GENERAL EDUCATION

Two new doctoral dissertations, one written at the University of Minnesota by our own Gail A. Koch, and the second at Northwestern University: Evanston by Roland Lincoln Guyotte, III, make useful contributions to our understanding of general education at this juncture, because both deal with history of the movement, and neither sees that history quite as Boyer and Levine do. In fact, reading the abstract prepared by Dr. Koch, one might conclude that the general education movement is dead--which could be taken to mean that General College might well consider review of its mission and the appropriateness of changing its name to reflect today's mission. Dr. Guotte, now a member of the faculty in history at the University of Minnesota: Morris, devotes a significant portion of his thesis to an account of General College in the 1930s.

Liberal Education and the American Dream: Public Attitudes and the Emergence of Mass Higher Education, 1920-1952 Roland L. Guyotte III

> Between 1928 and 1950 higher education in America grew from an aspiration to a right. Although these years have been aptly termed a time of consolidation in American academic life, as institutions build upon foundations already laid by 1910, this period witnessed a revival of liberal education as the centerpiece of college and university education. Taken together, the rapid growth of higher education's numbers and prestige and the coincident promotion of the liberal arts ushered in an era when liberal education became a part of the American dream.
>
> This eissertation traces the growth of the liberal education ideal between 1920 and 1950, concentrating primarily on the interplay among educators. Early in the period, college presidents and others advocated an upgrading of academic standards to assure the production of a leadership class of liberal arts graduates. Some of them sought to discourage the untalented from applying, while others adopted a variety of strategies to upgrade liberal arts practices at individual institutions. During the great depres-

sion, educators coped with the paradox that hard times brought increased enrollments and new missions for the college campus. A diverse and contradictory array of definitions of liberal education's proper meaning and clientele competed with each other for public support.

By the onset of American entry into World War II, higher education was increasingly defined as a social as well as an individual good. In addition to traditional roles, the liberal arts were now asked to educate for competence and cosmopolitanism. A democratic faith viewed widespread education as a bulwark against totalitarianism. As the G.I. Bill recorded a federal commitment to extend higher education widely, educators debated the recommendations of committees and commissions about the content and constituency of liberal education. By midcentury, the acceptance of an enhanced role for higher education shifted debate from questions of who should go to college to questions of who should pay the bills.

Four case studies illustrate the problems educators faced as they debated the merits of liberal education for the American citizenry. In contrast to majority sentiment in the 1920s, Alexander Meiklejohn conducted an Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin from 1927 to 1932 which argued that liberal education could be extended to ordinary students as well as superior ones. Shortly thereafter, educators at the University of Minnesota opened a similar venture, the General College, which redefined the goals of liberal education toward "life adjustment," and developed a program for the academically untalented.

During World War II, Harvard President James B. Conant appointed a committee to survey the place of liberal education for the whole society. The Harvard Report, General Education in a Free Society, called for a nationwide commitment to instruction in the liberal arts at all levels of education. Just as its report appeared, President Harry S. Truman appointed a national commission to examine the desirability and feasibility of broadened higher education. This commission's recommendations, in Higher Education for American Democracy, favored higher education as a right for all who could profit by it.

As the place of higher education in American society enlarged, educators organized into networks representing varied perspectives. Limited freedom of maneuver at individual institutions, diversity, and differences among educators all precluded drastic change between 1920 and 1950. Debates about liberal education consistently revealed disagreement, but they also displayed the emergence

by the 1950s of areas of agreement that would have been unthinkable in 1920. In the midst of an enduring pluralism of institutions and ideas, liberal education became a unifying force as an ideal, even though many professors and college presidents continued to argue about its meaning.

The General Education Movement in American Higher Education: An Account and Appraisal of its Principles and Practices and Their Relation to Democratic Thought in Modern American Society Gail A. Koch

The general education movement was a powerful thirty-year episode in twentieth-century American higher education. Obscuring the movement's significance, commentaries in the past two decades routinely harp upon its end in the early 1960's, dismiss its principles and practices as naive or faddish, take its "failure" to yield a universally acceptable definition of "general education" as license to assert the ancient, undisturbed synonymy of this term with "liberal education," and neglect the triumphant emergence of the movement's dominant experimentalist direction in the 1930's.

The term "general education" was a rallying cry in the 1930's for college educators interested in changing standard liberal education. They agreed neither on what changes were appropriate nor on how actively to foster them. But in any case, change was the desideratum--the criterion of modernity which decided the legitimacy of the college's place in the contemporary American educational hierarchy.

Educational changes proposed in the general education movement during the 1930's mirrored social criticism and theory. Like other institutions, colleges were charged with dehumanization and social irresponsibility: they were accused of dulling students' capacities to perform their roles in society sensitively and competently. In response, colleges proposed to humanize undergraduate education and prepare students for empirical problem solving--a democratic method of participating in the shaping and reshaping of the social order. College educators, adapting to divergent social theories, took their agreed-upon social responsibility in one of two directions: 1) training students of high academic standing for the role of social experts to manage society or advise its leaders or 2) developing and honing the empirical skills of all students to acquire the competence to solve social problems and manage society collectively.

To the causes of changing undergraduate education and nurturing future citizens, the colleges and the movement which supported them brought modern managerial leadership

and the authority and productivity of modern professionalization. The new leaders publicized changes nationally and induced their faculties to use the new experimental methodology to develop undergraduate programs. Dissenting voices, especially in liberal arts colleges, expressed anxiety about the standardization of procedures which this new professionalism fostered, resented the intrusion of educational specialists, and warned against relinquishing control of college programs to foundations and government agencies biased toward educational experimentalism.

Three approaches to educational change were manifest in the general education movement during the 1930's: the predominant maverick variety, looking to reform liberal education, embraced educational experimentalism and addressed the abilities and interests of unconventional students; the mainstream variety, desiring to renovate liberal education for more conventional students, proposed to refurbish curriculum and administration and institute various means to assure competency in the academic fields of knowledge; the isolationist approach proposed to restore traditional liberal arts and practices. The extent to which each approach found educational experimentalism compatible matched the degree to which each accepted the new social sciences and the Progressive conflict theory of education.

Domination of the general education movement by Progressive experimentalist leadership reached its peak at the close of the Depression decade. By 1945, with the publication of the Harvard Report, which vindicated the position of liberal arts colleges, mainstream authority over undergraduate educational policy was reasserted. It remained for Daniel Bell in The Reforming of General Education, published in 1966, to amend the mainstream position, adding emphases upon the natural and social sciences and their "value-free" analytical methodologies--the perceived new educational imperatives for the management of technological society. Reflecting the consensus climate of the World War II period and the subsequent Cold War years, the mainstream resurgence, completed by the early 1960's, brought the general education movement to a close.

Ed. Note: Both of the foregoing are from Dissertation Abstracts International, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.